

THE
American Tract Society
IN
THE FAMILY.

BY REV. YATES HICKEY,
SUPERINTENDENT OF COLPORTAGE, CHICA-
GO AGENCY.

CHICAGO:
NO. 69 STATE-STREET,
1857.



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1. THE NEED OF IT.
2. HOW TO USE IT.
3. WHAT IT IS DOING.
4. WHAT IT PROMISES, OR IS ADAPTED TO DO.

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IN THE FAMILY.

IN order to appreciate the value of an instrumentality designed to bless our households, we must hold an intelligent estimate of the importance God attaches to *the family*, at all times and in all nations. Having this, and then finding our providential position discovered to us by the light of facts in current history, we may learn and feel what are our necessities.

In the early time God made this announcement: "Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him; and they shall keep the ways of the Lord, to do justice and judgment."

So much importance has God attached to the family and its influence in his economy, as a means of social, political, moral, and religious good to our race, that when he declared to Abraham that he should "surely become a great and mighty nation," and that "all the nations of the earth" should be "blessed in him," God made this promise to rest on the fact that Abraham would *command* his children and his household after him, that they should keep the ways of the Lord. This was a requirement which must be met, in order that the Lord might bring upon Abraham that which he had spoken of him. And ever since, the condition of the family has marked the character and indicated the destiny of nations. Whenever the original, pure, and holy idea of the family has been obscured, and its instruction neglected, then ignorance and licentiousness have prepared the way for decline and ruin.

But we are assured that the results of family instruction and government in the household of Abraham should have their influence, not only while he lived, but that "all the nations of the earth" should be blessed by it. Let us examine some matters of fact from which we may naturally draw principles and considerations of duty. And taking the history of Abraham and his descendants as our example, it is not assuming too

much to place this nation in the light of it. By so doing we gain the force of analogy, and more : we have the commands of God for our direction, and his promises for our encouragement. It was God who promised so great things to Abraham, and through him to the nations ; and happy will it be for this people if, by receiving timely warning from the past, we shall be able to perpetuate and secure an increase of those blessings which began to flow upon us at the commencement of our national existence, and are continued still.

How rich were the promises which God made to Abraham, and how faithfully are they being fulfilled ! And how closely allied to those promises, in their wide and benevolent scope, do we find the providential history of this great republic. Yet this young nation, as we trust in God, has but begun its existence, if we consider the amount of influence we hope it is yet to exert on the world. Its influence *must* be great, greater than it is possible for us now to estimate, and the question for each one to take home to his heart and to daily ponder is, *What* shall that influence be ? for *good*, or for *evil* ?

It is not too much to say, that the free air we breathe is a part of the blessing of God through Abraham as a Christian father and faithful governor of his household. Witness the character of

his son Isaac, the patriarch Jacob, and the high-minded Joseph, who gained the honors of a kingdom, and saved his own nation from destruction by famine, by a strict adherence to principle as taught by his fathers. Follow the line of glory till the babe was born in Bethlehem and nurtured at Nazareth—till the Saviour was betrayed at Gethsemane, crucified on Calvary, and rose from the dead, to live and reign and make intercession for sinners for whom he had made atonement—and know that “the nations of the earth” *have been, are, and shall be* blessed in Him, the natural descendant of Abraham. And mark, that all this was made to depend upon Abraham’s fulfilling the condition which God made binding, even that he should command his children and his household after him—that he should instruct and guide them as a Christian father.

We have adduced this example as one of many furnished in the Bible, to show what importance God attaches to the family, and to its correct moral and religious instruction and government; and we see what blessings follow, and how general they become.

This example has a contrast most sad and suggestive, in the course which Eli pursued with his sons; for we learn that they caused his death and their own ruin, because they were not

commanded in the sense in which braham commanded his children, but were left to their own uncontrolled waywardness. God declares, "I have told him that I will judge his house for ever," "because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."

The truth taught by the examples here referred to is abundantly attested by instances which come within the range of ordinary observation, and concerning which we only add the following contrasted and most significant scripture comments :

"Train up a child in the way he should go ; and when he is old he will not depart from it."

"But a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."

"The just man walketh in his integrity : his children are blessed after him."

"Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

"The eye that mocketh at his father, or despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

And may we not hence see that what we as a people *have been* and *have done*, and *what we are* and *are now doing* in the political, moral, and religious world, is attributable, in an important, if not in a primary sense, to family influence ; and that *what we are to be and to do* depends on the same ?

We predicate this view on the immutable principles of God's government, as revealed in his word, and illustrated in his providence in his dealings with the nations. History is abundant in its proofs, but we have space for only an allusion to some prominent marks in our own country's record : and we need only allude to our fathers, the dear brave purchasers and transmitters of our liberty, to inspire fresh admiration for their high religious character, and to remind us of the straitness with which they commanded their children and their households. They discountenanced in the most positive and peremptory manner the violation of the Sabbath, the neglect of public worship, and all kinds of profaneness and licentiousness. As parents and heads of families, they felt under obligation to care for the moral deportment of all who were committed to their charge. They felt a responsibility for their spiritual and eternal interests ; and the economy of their households was so ordered as to carry the conviction to the minds of their children, that the knowledge,

the love, and the service of God is *the great business of life*, to which every thing else is to be subservient. They understood full well, from the Bible and their own experience, that *the family* is the great school for educating freemen, the great nursery of piety; and that whatever tends to elevate and purify the family, so far promotes the peace, liberty, safety, and well-being of the state, and the prosperity of the church. And we know that men holding and carrying out such principles as these founded our colleges, originated our systems of common schools, offered the first intelligent resistance to tyranny, struck the first blow for liberty, and framed and executed our best laws.

Our beloved country's "father" was a child and youth of careful instruction and training. He knew and bore testimony to the value of family religion; and down to the latest age it will be well for parents to encourage their own hearts and strengthen the principles of their children by frequent reference to the story of "Washington and the Cherry-tree." It shows that "the boy is father to the man;" that the man is in the boy, and that then his character is formed. It shows that mothers are the framers of man's character, and that "whatever may be the fate of man, one stamp he always bears on his brow—that which the

mother's hand impressed on the soul of the child."

It was through the influence of men who had such home advantages as Washington, that success crowned the revolutionary struggle, and that our Constitution was framed on principles so nearly in accordance with the will of God as expressed in the Bible. And thus far the God of nations has continued to us the blessed inheritance, transmitting it in an almost unbroken line of presidents who have devotedly loved or openly sustained the institutions of the gospel; through such hands as the venerated Adams, who never forgot that when a child his mother taught him that beautiful evening prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep," etc.

We would gladly linger to recount the blessings which the influence of the family have conferred upon us politically, but must pass to another view.

The household religion of our fathers prepared the way for civil liberty; and in turn those institutions which are the fruit of religion, inspiring and giving a safe direction to patriotism, have blessed the church, and secured to her those greater means of usefulness which can be enjoyed only in a free and happy country. Religious instruction has been permitted and encouraged in

the family, the school, and the college. The Bible has, with a few dark exceptions, been an open book, and we have no law to check the usefulness of the moral and religious press.

Under the influence of religion as developed in that first divine institution *the family*, this republic has stood firm ; while others which had not the bulwark of intelligence and religion for their defence, have risen and *fallen* by the score.

Under the influence of religion as thus developed, the church of Christ has prospered in all quarters of the land, and from the older portions have gone forth piety, talent, and wealth, to bless the benighted of our own and other nations. Nor is this a time or an age in which it will do to stand still. We must see to it that the instructive lessons of the past are improved in securing far greater achievements in the future.

We have seen the extent of God's promise to Abraham, and it requires no stretch of faith to believe that this nation was baptized with the influence transmitted through him as a true Christian father. We covet the continuance of that blessing : but if we would enjoy it, we must comply with the conditions as Abraham did ; for if we forget "the law of our God," he will forget our children ; and if they be forsaken of God, our criminality

will be as immeasurable as the results upon our nation must be dreadful.'

Is it not safe and wise to infer, then, that *the future of this nation's greatness and usefulness, and the future of the blessings which may flow through the American churches to the world, depend, under God, primarily upon the kind of instruction and government which shall be maintained in our families?*

We can, in the space we wish to occupy, only thus allude to the marked resemblance between Abraham's circumstances and the promises made to him, and the position and the promises implied in providence to this young nation. The analogy might be carried out with great completeness. It is not the analogy of theory merely, by which nothing is very definitely proved, but the analogy of *facts*. Facts carry conviction to the mind, and these are so plainly written on the face of our history, that he who will may compare them with the word of God, and learn that He has not forgotten his covenant and promises, nor failed to bless the use of appointed instrumentalities for elevating the position of nations, or the labors of those who reverence his law.

And it is thus certain that the family, in its proper institution and with its proper moral and religious instruction, is necessary to maintain the position of those who have been elevated by its

blessings. *How much more necessary, how indispensable must it then be, in the work of elevating the unblest masses, the ignorant and the vicious, the scattered, neglected, and degraded.*

It is in connection with this last thought, and in view of the importance which God manifestly attaches to the family, and the perils which must attend the neglect of its instruction, that we would speak of

THE FAMILY IN OUR COUNTRY.

Individuals good and bad are here. Families are here the heads of which "command their children" in the high and beneficent sense of God's direction, and families *without instruction or government* abound. Communities are found which are blessed with family religion and instruction, and their universal fruits, the school, the Sabbath, the gospel, the church, and the capacity to live and enjoy them; and from these go our intelligent and safe law-makers and executors, our pastors, teachers, and missionaries: in these is our hope, while upon them rests a great responsibility. But the general fact is different. There are broad prairies and mountain fastnesses and the sparsely settled wilderness; cities but recently founded, and so rapidly grown as to present a most heterogeneous collection of names, nations, habits, and

tongues ; and multitudes of places in parts of the country, both old and new, presenting grounds where the minister of Christ cannot go and steadily deliver his messages of love. And all these are the very places where pernicious influences grow and strengthen.

There are vast numbers of children and youth, and young men and young women, and those of all ages, who enjoy no proper *family* influence. Multitudes are literally afloat, and have no steady abiding-place ; and many who have long enjoyed a home and the blessings of the family, are rapidly losing all restraints, and taking license to do all manner of evil.

And where the family is maintained in form, there is an alarming and growing absence of that instruction and government which are absolutely necessary to keep the family alive. The father is intent upon his gains, or is obliged to exert all his energies to supply the wants of his household ; and having never known books, or having left his books behind him in his migrations from place to place, he gives up thought and study and instruction, and takes on the rough features of his home and his labors, leaving all instruction and discipline to the mother. She, with many cares and trials and labors, and with no means or aids in books, or lessons remembered, soon learns

to put off the first duty she owes to her children ; and they grow up wild and rude, without knowledge of society, laws, or religion, and are the ready tools of the strong and the easy dupes of the designing.

A sad specimen of *this large class of families*, thus imperfectly described, was personally known to the writer within a few months past. A young man who had enjoyed the pious instructions of a praying mother in the east, married and moved west. He made no profession of love for the Saviour, but lived a moral life, and was held in high esteem by his neighbors. He believed it his duty to labor hard and gain a worldly inheritance, and that if he wronged no one he was safe. The Bible was neglected ; churches were remote, and no effort was made to attend them. Years have passed. A large family are living on a cultivated farm. To labor and to gain has been the chief concern ; and as a result, sons have almost no education, and not even common respect for the religion of the Bible. Daughters grow up who know not the meaning of the cross, the precious and sad emblem of Christ's death, with the story of which they are unfamiliar. Vain amusements occupy the time and thoughts, and absorb the earnings which might otherwise be employed to obtain useful furniture for mind and heart. And now

the moral man comes to see his mistake. He sees his godless family are going astray in many different roads, and are unprepared to walk uprightly in any. He finds out his own need of a regenerated heart and a renovated character. He embraces the truth, and attempts to set up the true standard of living ; but opposition, ridicule, and disorder discover to him how sad a thing it is to allow a household to grow up without the salutary "command" to which God attaches so much importance.

And this is only an average case. It is probably *better* than the average ; for here we see the father of the family turning to God, and trying to lead his household with him to the family altar, the church, and the Sunday-school ; while in most cases the whole pass on to ruin in an unbroken company. We are no alarmists ; but *the true picture*, a picture which may be found in almost any, nay, which has been found in *every* district of our country, is sad ; and there are dangers to souls, and to peace, order, and prosperity.

Here is the seat of error. Here errors propagate themselves with wonderful success. Here, notwithstanding all that has been done, are vast regions where families enjoy no schools, no preaching, no religious books or Sabbath-schools, and oftentimes no Bible ; and hence the case with

which errors multiply themselves and spread among the people. Their name is legion. From blank Atheism to Universalism, Mormonism, Romanism, and all the minor isms which hang so heavily on the progress of the gospel, all find zealous adherents; and amid these influences the youth receive their impressions, and the family is lost. For these errorists, disagreeing among themselves and with each other, yet are agreed in rejecting the great principles of Bible Christianity, and unite their forces in denouncing evangelical truth and all those institutions which aim at the education and elevation of the people. A vast, diversified, and powerful set of machinery is at work in our country, which, if left to its own unchecked operation, would quickly demolish education and the Sabbath, drive out the Bible, and leave a moral wreck.

These are truths whose illustration has become too familiar to admit of doubt; and it becomes considerate men to pause and inquire whereunto this may grow. It is well for us to reflect that it is in a land as open to the assaults of error as to the teachings of truth, and among a people making haste to be rich. It is preventing and destroying the legitimate influence of the family, which this population cannot, must not lose, or they are lost, and incalculable evil must follow.

Not here only, but here chiefly must our present efforts be expended. The safety of our institutions and the interests of the cause of Christ throughout the world demand it. So largely do universal liberty and the prevalence of Christianity depend upon the issue of the great struggle here commenced, the great battle here thickening between truth and error, liberty and despotism, Christ and antichrist, that we cannot estimate too highly the importance of thickly setting and manfully defending here the standards of truth and a pure gospel.

Romanism, now but another name for despotism, and infidelity are combined, and determined to govern our country. All our danger should be truly apprehended, and the proper defences at once made ready. While the disease is yet in a manageable state, the wisest physician should be called. Our only sure remedy is in the gospel, and this can take effect primarily only in individual hearts. It is only by its effect upon individuals that it can reach the whole body, and curing all our ills, save our people, our country, and our institutions, and through them bless the world; and we are assured by all past history and the well-known necessities of the present, that most of this work must be begun and continued in the family.

Respecting all his holy commands and instructions, our heavenly Father says expressly, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart ; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children ; and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest in the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

The necessity is here asserted for the universal prevalence of Bible instruction and evangelical religion in families, in another form and at a later day ; and it may be inferred as particularly necessary in a country like ours, insomuch that the intelligent observer of our wants must hail with pleasure and with hope any and every institution which is wisely adapted to promote these objects. We therefore present

THE AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY IN THE FAMILY,

And assume that it is such an institution as the family needs. The Tract Society, with its choice selections and numerous issues of the best books of all ages, is *peculiarly an institution for the family*. For this sphere it was designed and is adapted, as appears on its very face, in its history, and by the titles of its publications. First of all we have the "Family Bible" with brief notes and instruc-

tions, and other valuable helps to its study. We have "Sacred Songs for Family Worship," "Songs" and "Easy Lessons for the Little Ones at Home," "The Child's Paper," "Child at Home," "Mother at Home," "Letters to a Daughter," "Counsels to Young Men," "Advice to a Married Couple," and many others of hallowed remembrance, to which God has given great power to do good in the family.

In speaking of "the Tract Society in the family," we call attention to, 1. The need of it ; 2. How to use it ; 3. What it is doing ; and, 4. What it promises, or is adapted to do. And for all these views we should have a sufficient illustration, could we print the observations and experiences to the amount of one month's time selected from the labors of our brethren in different parts of the country. We should learn from these,

1. *The need of the Tract Society in the family*, from the disorganized state of society in all the newer districts, tending to the neglect of instruction and the disregard of restraints, and to general dissipation of mind. These are the first-fruits of emigration, and in connection with them we find much destitution and neglect. In many families there is no Bible ; in many more no religious book is found. Multitudes have not the gospel

in any form, and never hear it preached. And here we can see how easy it is to lead the active mind to evil, if pernicious influences prevail; and they are sure to enter unoccupied ground. We see also how greatly the Tract Society, as a pioneer missionary agency, is needed to come into all such families and communities, and occupy the minds of the people; to secure the continuance of any former good habits; to reiterate the command to keep the Sabbath holy; to urge to temperance; to guard against the thousand errors which rush into minds not preoccupied with the truth; and to lead immortal souls to Christ.

It is needed in very many places as the only means of religious instruction and training which can be brought to bear or gain access through the superstitions and prejudices which lie against denominations; and it is needed to render the family intelligent and *ready to believe*, and also to guide and educate for usefulness after conversion. Many false professions are made from want of definite and full instruction in the gospel plan of salvation, and the Tract Society is needed to prevent the evils which follow the making of false professions, by its abundant teaching in tracts and books where other means are not enjoyed.

It is needed as an auxiliary to the preaching and teaching of the ministry everywhere, and to

help forward every true and well-defined reform through the family. The great and vital cause of home or domestic missions requires such an auxiliary as the system of colportage, and both are becoming more and more a necessity for our whole country.

It is needed to give to many foreigners a correct idea of what the true family is, and to teach them American law, acquaint them with gospel institutions, and show them the nature and fruits of evangelical religion.

And it is needed, greatly needed to counteract and displace the corrupt literature which is most industriously spread abroad in the daily, weekly, and monthly press, and in pamphlets and books, and which is gaining access to and destroying many thousands of families, and helping to fill the land and the world with crime and disorder. "It should not be forgotten that the agency of the press, which is so powerful as a means of intellectual and spiritual elevation, has equal power for evil when employed by infidel or irreligious hands." There are large numbers of persons and a vast amount of capital employed in "deluding our youth with dreams of unreal bliss, pandering to the taste of the licentious, seducing the innocent, profaning all sacred things, sacrificing the temporal and eternal welfare of thousands by

prostituting the press for the sake of gain." And all the marvellous facilities for giving rapid circulation are pressed into the service of this death-dealing traffic. "The ravages of this misnamed 'literature' are scarcely less wide-spread than those of intemperance. It has demoralized thousands of the unsuspecting, and is known to have been the occasion of ruin to many of both sexes by its polluting pages; and an immense proportion of the issues of the popular press are of this sort—too vast a proportion for the temporal or spiritual well-being of this reading nation, or for the safety of institutions based on the sound intelligence and virtue of the people." See tract No. 493.

Surely here is a work for the Tract Society with its printed gospel and attractive issues, suited to persons of all ages and all conditions of society. It is needed in all our families, both as preventive and cure for the evils of worthless or injurious publications.

2. *How to use the Tract Society in the family.* As a fact it is used with the greatest pleasure and advantage in tens of thousands of families in all parts of the land, and in other lands, and is employed in very many ways to accomplish a great many good objects. How shall we use the Tract Society? Why, the question which multi-

tudes are ready to ask is, "How could we do without it?" so deeply has it become rooted in the affections of those families which have learned its value, and "how to use it."

Use it to interest and instruct the youngest and tenderest mind capable of receiving impressions through the eye or ear, and fix upon that mind some simple lesson of truth which shall grow up with it and become part of its character. Yes, let the *youngest children* have it, and the older children, the youth, the young man and the young woman, the middle-aged and the old. Let all use it, for there is something to interest and benefit all. Employ it on the Sabbath and every day in the week. Let the mothers and the fathers, and teachers, use it diligently and prayerfully, as God's instrument of great power in guiding the minds and forming the principles of the multitude who may be benefited by it. Take it with you when you journey; use it in your shops and factories and stores and offices, and give it a place on your farms and plantations, for in all these ways it will gain access to the family, and with God's blessing it will do great good. Employ it in personal efforts to bless your needy neighbors, and encourage others to use it. Have its issues always at hand, and study to use them to the best advantage, and you will ever

be discovering fresh occasions and new ways in which to use it.

Let the *private Christian* thus use it; and we would respectfully suggest also, let *the ministry* use it more and more; and after filling their own minds and hearts with the glowing illustrations of divine truth and grace found in the publications of this Society, let them employ their help more fully in pastoral labors, and in a hundred ways which practice will suggest and render easy and pleasant.

3. *What the Tract Society is doing in our families.* It is teaching sound morals and pure religion. It is visiting, by its colporteurs, life members, directors, and active friends, all the families of our land, and supplying, by sale or gift, every accessible household with the means of such religious instruction as is, by the blessing of God, *bringing many souls to Christ*, and fitting them for usefulness. There are tens of thousands of persons in as many families in our country who will praise God with their latest breath, while pointing to some book or tract as *God's means* of blessing their households and saving their souls.

It is a blessed instrumentality for counteracting the infidel, irreligious, and corrupt press, and is owned of God in this important work, as fre-

quent reports and statistics abundantly prove. As a fair example in proof, I would remark, that a colporteur recently said to me that he visited a Christian family in which was a young man who had devoted much time to reading the bad publications to which I here refer, and had, by their influence, become reckless, and, as he afterwards admitted, "As much an infidel as any thing." The colporteur succeeded in selling to him "Nelson on Infidelity." The young man read it, was convinced of his errors, and at once resolved to unburden his shelves from the large collection of fascinating, but worthless and pernicious books he had gathered. To use his own language, he "took off the griddle, and shoved them in." And thus may we not hope that multitudes who are now eagerly receiving and reading what the emissaries of darkness are so diligently scattering, will bring forth their books to be burned?—the only safe way in which to dispose of them. Such indeed is the direct influence of this Society's labors; and who will refuse to pray for its far greater, even its complete success?

It is reclaiming the wanderer, and saving from error; is helping individuals and families to reform bad habits, and cultivate better ones; it is moulding many characters for this world and for the next, and exerting an incalculable influence

on all departments of education, by imparting to the mind desires for knowledge and experience of its benefits. Its colporteurs are placing selections from its publications in district school libraries; and through all the grades of schools, from the primary to the academy, the college, and even into professional departments in the university, it is found at work; and in not a few instances is known to have been the original agency in *opening the way* for instruction where now flourishing schools are maintained.

What is it doing? It is blessed of God in the conversion of many souls among all ages and classes, but especially among the hardened and abandoned, and those wholly neglected or unreached by other agencies. It is filling school-houses and churches, and *helping every other department of benevolent operations, at home and abroad, by what it does in the family, in developing a LOVE for these active Christian labors.*

It is causing many family altars to be erected where the voice of prayer was never before heard—to which end the Family Testament and Bible have been greatly blessed—and is successfully teaching that evangelical religion is a necessity in every well-regulated family, and that without it the blessing of God need not be expected.

It is meeting the foreign immigrants as they land on our shores ; meets them again and again at the various prominent points of transshipment in their journey to the interior ; and is following them as they separate into families and go to their cabins on the prairies or along the rivers, in the mountains or the backwoods, not neglecting those in cities ; and many of them, after their long wanderings from home and friends and country, are brought by this kind and humble agency to acknowledge the great Father of all, and become his servants in efforts to reclaim their countrymen who still wander from God. The great variety of the Society's publications in different languages, enables it to prosecute the work in behalf of our vast foreign population with encouraging success.

More than four years ago the writer was permitted and constrained to say, in presenting his annual report to this Society, that "so deeply are the efficiency of the religious press and the usefulness of this Society impressed on my mind from the constant discovery of facts, that I fully believe, if it were to-day forsaken by all *except those who have been brought into the kingdom of Christ through its instrumentality*, and are now living, it would be taken up by them and carried forward." Such was the belief then, and every month of

observation and experience since has only served to fasten the delightful conviction more firmly. To God be all the praise. And let his people be encouraged to help, and to pray for the descent of the Holy Spirit, that it may fill all our hearts, and baptize all this admirable machinery, so that its power may be manifestly of God, and not of man. Then shall the report of "what it is doing" be in better proportion to its providential adaptation to the great work before it, and the urgent demand for its agency.

4. *What the Tract Society promises, or is adapted to do.* The only hope of a lost world is, that the Saviour lives and loves souls; that this love is shed abroad in the hearts of Christians, and is leading them, as light increases, more and more to see and feel that effort is best expended in works of benevolence; that money is best invested, and will ultimately bring the richest harvest, when lent to the Lord; and that union of hearts and hands in labors of love, is the best business for all the family of the redeemed.

And just here comes in the Tract Society to aid the private Christian, the pastor, and the missionary, with its many hundreds of evangelical books and tracts adapted to every age, and to almost every circumstance and condition of every individual and family, and which are approved, cir-

culated, and used by all denominations of evangelical Christians.

These the Society publish at the rate of about fifty thousand per day, and can *publish in any number* demanded by the wisdom and liberality of the churches. These they seek to circulate by any and all available agencies, selling at exceedingly low rates, or giving where the case requires. But the chief instrumentality for circulating publications and benefiting families, is our loved *system of colportage*. None are desired to engage in this labor but such as *consecrate themselves to it*, as the work and calling to which God in his providence invites them. Such men the Society will send forth, in such numbers as its funds will enable it to sustain, into all parts of our forming and needy country.

Let the colporteur go and mingle with our families, carrying with him the precious Messenger and the beautiful and instructive Child's Paper, and the thousand and more of different tracts for all classes and ages. Let him carry the beautiful and valuable illustrated series, the Pictorial Tract Primer, the Bible Primers, Child's Primer, and the great variety of excellent books and tracts for children; let him take to the sick-room the Afflicted Man's Companion, or the Dying Thoughts of Baxter; let his satchel be supplied

with copies of the Mother at Home, that it may counsel and guide mothers in the discharge of duty; Morrison's Counsels, and the Young Man from Home, to guard the youth from temptation and teach him the way of life; Nelson, Spring, and other authors, to stop the mouths of infidels and lead them to Christ; the works of Doddridge, Bunyan, Baxter, Wilberforce, Edwards, and others, to teach, instruct, defend against error, and build up in faith and love; Flavel, pointing so plainly and affectionately to the Fountain of Life and the Method of Grace, and to Christ Knocking at the Door of the sinner's heart; Pike, to persuade to Early Piety and Guide the Young Disciple; the enchanting History of the great Reformation, the Spirit of Popery, the Colporteur and Roman-catholic, and others, to show the papist his errors and point him to the life of faith.

To the sordid, the avaricious, and the selfish, and those too much absorbed in the world, let him furnish the premium essays on beneficence, and other books and tracts which call for a self-denying benevolence, and point for motives to it to the word of God, the wants of the world, and the day of final judgment.

Let him exhibit the missionary spirit, and arouse it in others, by the lives of Brainerd and Martyn, of Mrs. Winslow and Mrs. Smith, and let

him scatter broadcast the Temperance and Sabbath Manuals.

Let the colporteur carry these and hundreds more of the Society's books and tracts, so honored by usefulness, as he visits the villages, towns, and cities, or penetrates the forests, or rides over prairies, and searches out every abode in every district, and our families may be snatched from the grasping hand of error; and the terrible plague of ignorance, of infidelity, and of vice in every form and in its most dreadful effects, may be stayed.

The want is appalling. The remedy is sure. God has chosen it, and is blessing it. There is hope; but this rests on the diligent use of means, the efficient use of those agencies which God in his providence has provided. These are now furnished to our hand, and there is too much to do to allow of inaction anywhere in any one.

The Bible and an authorized ministry are the primary instrumentalities for making known the truth in the family, and we praise God for all that has been done. We exalt the Bible, we honor the ministry, as God's chosen and favored instruments of salvation. They have done more than all others combined to make the family what it is in character and influence in Christian lands. But their number! The number now or to be in

the ministry, alas, is too small to do all the work of evangelization ; nor does God design that they should do it all. *The church* must work for God, and her sons must consecrate themselves to his service in other spheres than the ministry. The faithful colporteur, hired or voluntary, may enable many servants of the church who are dead to preach to thousands and millions without cessation. The Bible must have distributors ; and so must the works of those who have loved the Bible, and have expressed most faithfully, plainly, and forcibly the teachings of the Bible, and have placed their illustrations of divine truth on the printed page to supply the lack of living teachers.

The sanctified press and personal Christian effort are the means by which the American Tract Society is prepared in part, and is preparing more fully as Providence brings to it the needed aid, to assist in the great work of evangelization, by securing a healthful, a saving family influence ; and if pure religion be the fruit, the remedy for vice and every ill will be found by this laying of the axe at the root of the tree. If all the power which God is manifesting his willingness to give to these instrumentalities is to be made available in this time of our nation's need, the disciples of Christ must work ; and all

who love their country must help to save it by contributing, by every way in their power, to give efficiency to all means for placing our families in a position to accomplish the purposes of their divine appointment; and there is something for all Christians and all patriots to do. "The world is becoming more and more known, wider in magnitude, closer in intercourse, more loving and more eventful than of old." The savor of Christ and his cross is securing more and more rapidly the triumphs of the Prince of peace, and *our entire nation should be trained and fitted to bear a noble part in the conquest of the kingdoms of the earth to pure Christianity.*

Our entire history is one of blessing, and no suitable acknowledgment of mercies received can be made without corresponding efforts cheerfully put forth to bless others. This involves individual responsibility and action, and necessitates personal consecration. With these felt and made, and God's blessing added, the work may be done. There are whole states and territories in the West fast springing into importance, for whose wants this Society seems to have been especially contrived by Providence; while we have wide districts in every part of the land which cannot be effectually reached with evangelical instruction by any other means. There

are souls in countless families beyond the reach of the minister's voice, and in regions where he cannot be supported.

In the system of colportage, there is a happy combination of personal labor and teaching by means of the press. Who can doubt its efficiency? Certainly not those who are conversant with the happy fruits. Avenues are opened, and our heterogeneous population is accessible, if we will meet them kindly at their homes, carrying with us the spirit and the messages of Christ. And lightly as the momentous fact seems to have impressed the minds of multitudes, it is scarcely a paradox to say that this Society has raised the dead and is sending them forth to the help of the living. Nay, more, it has multiplied each of them in their works, and enables them to preach permanently in thousands of places, and may enable them to preach in the street, in the palace, and in the cottage and cabin, in the rail-car, on the steam-boat, in the school, in the family, and from house to house, in hundreds of thousands of places at the same time and all the time. Yes, "the mightiest minds, the warmest hearts, the most active and devoted and eminent servants of God of every age, these they have summoned back from eternity, and holding them in commission in their immortal works, are now ready to

send them to every village and hamlet," to every individual and family in our land and the world. And who will help us do it?

The more we reflect upon the character of our population and the influences at work here for evil, the more important do we regard the efforts of this Society to evangelize this vast community of congregated nations.

The importance of *early influences*, in forming the character of such a people, surpasses estimation. Our numbers now are comparatively few, and access is easy. If the moral force of the settled portions of our country be put in operation *now*, it can mould the character of the many increasing settlements. But without these influences on the family, Christian character is never formed, either in individuals or nations ; and what is to become of a large portion of our population, native and foreign, unless faithful colporteurs in greatly increased numbers are sent to their doors, carrying with them the publications of this Society, "culled by judicious hands as gems from the mine of truth," attractive in style, cheap in price, and selected by the colporteur with reference to the wants of individuals and families as he comes personally to know them? From what can the church hope more than from this agency? Many thousands of these families must perish in hea-

then darkness in the midst of a Christian land, if the means to save them be refused ; and who will have to answer for it ? The instrumentality is at hand, and the opportunities for using it are rapidly passing. Shall they be improved fully, partially, or not at all ? God has made our duty *very plain*.

There is hope in the fact that society is yet in a plastic state. The enemy is at work, and is terribly successful ; but let this Society aid the home missionaries, and send out its own laborers with publications teeming from the sanctified press in English, German, French, Spanish, Dutch, Welsh, Danish, Italian, Swedish, and Hungarian, and with them all carrying the *Bible*, and we shall see pious mothers and intelligent and obedient children, family religion, and a light in many hearts and homes where now all is dark. Temperance will triumph, the Sabbath will be remembered and kept holy, ignorance will give place to intelligence, souls will be saved, error will die out for want of sustenance, and Zion will become beautiful for situation. Neglect it, and darkness that may be felt and days of disaster must soon succeed.

The mission of Jesus is to be accomplished amid commotions ; and the busy, moving character of our population is much more hopeful than

it would be, did we see the pall of a dead passivity resting upon the land. Let the advantage be improved, and the generations following shall rise up and call us blessed. And let the person who contributes only enough to pay the expense of publishing a single volume, reflect that he is providing spiritual nutriment not only for the families of this generation, but for generations yet to be born. "The tracts of Luther more than three hundred years old have been found, not only preserved in public libraries, but in the possession of the German emigrant on our western borders, teaching the same truths that shook the papacy and convulsed the world in the period of the Reformation, still reiterating in American forests the glorious doctrine that 'the just shall live by faith.' The publications now going forth in such numbers from a sanctified press may be doing their silent work of mercy centuries hence, and until the world is destroyed." And if, instead of giving circulation to one volume, this person contributes funds enough for a hundred or a thousand volumes, who can calculate the amount of good which a Christian, or any man in moderate circumstances, may accomplish for the *families* of our land?

And if, in addition to helping *publish*, he has the means to support one or more living agents who

will go forth prayerfully to *distribute* these immortal works, pleading with God at every step to water the seed sown and make it bear a hundred-fold increase, who can tell where the circling waves of blessing to the needy will end, or how many precious souls one may thus be instrumental in bringing home to his glorious Redeemer?

“Oh how sweet, to dwellings lonely
Leaves of heavenly truth to bear ;
Dropping print where printing only
Comes to bring salvation there ;
Kindling in each house a flame
With my Saviour's glowing name.”

NOTE.—We would respectfully and earnestly request that all who desire to help us in this good work of the Tract Society, in any or all of its departments—any who love our common Saviour, and desire to take part with us in this labor of love, will not wait to be called upon for aid, but send as soon as practicable, and *whenever* practicable, to any of the Society's agents or superintendents, at their several places of residence, or to O. R. Kingsbury, Esq., Assistant Treasurer, 150 Nassau-street, New York.

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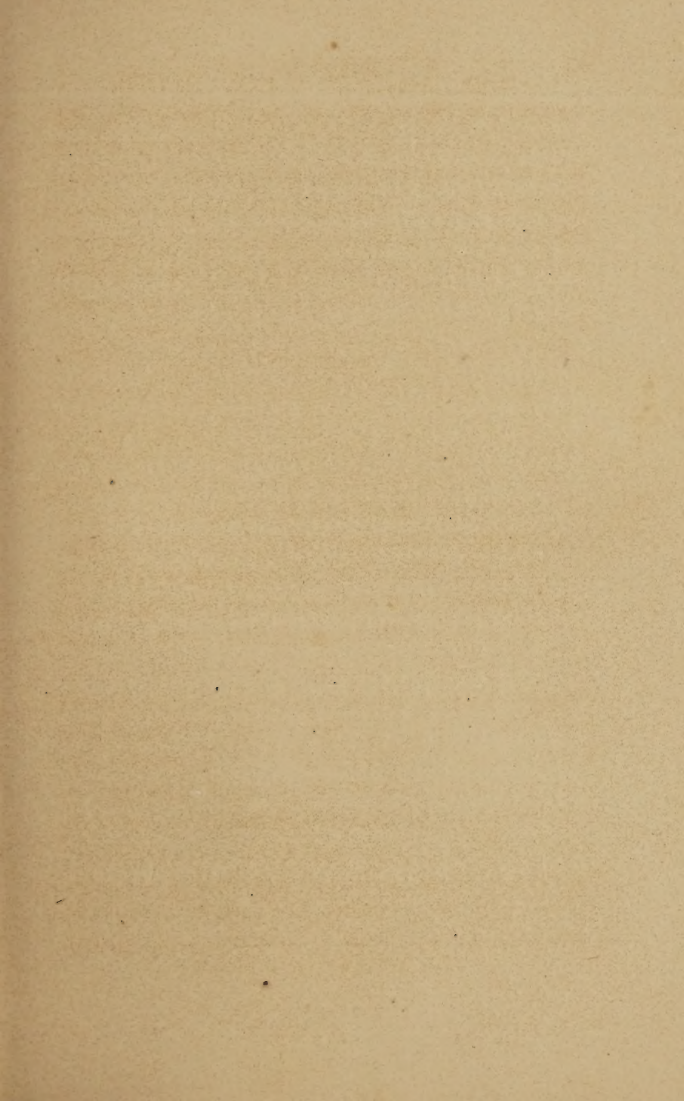
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